

European Frogbit WATCH



Photo credit: Erich Haber

How to Identify European Frogbit

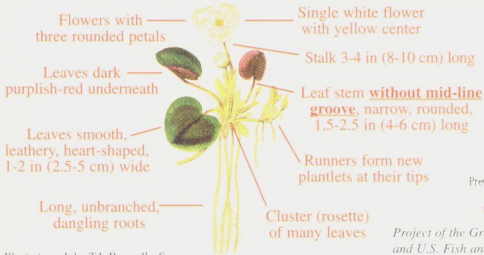


Illustration: John T.I. Boswell - Syme



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HITCHHIKERS!™**

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*Project of the Great Lakes Sea Grant Network
and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*

General Characteristics

- Usually free-floating, sometimes rooted, aquatic plant that resembles a small water lily
- A native look-alike, American frogbit (*Limnobium spongia*) has a mid-line groove on leaf stem
- Interlocking plants can form impenetrable mats at the water's surface

European Frogbit

European frogbit (*Hydrocharis morsus-ranae*) is a free-floating aquatic plant that can quickly choke shallow ponds, open marshes, ditches, and edges of lakes. Dense layers of interlocking plants and dangling roots can interfere with swimming, boating, fishing, and waterfowl hunting. European frogbit can displace native aquatic plants and deplete dissolved oxygen levels, impacting fish and wildlife. Following escape from cultivation in Ontario in 1932, it spread along the Ottawa, Rideau, and St. Lawrence rivers into the northeastern U.S. It has also spread to shorelines of lakes Ontario, Erie, St. Clair, and Champlain and to inland lakes in Washington, New York, and Michigan.

European frogbit can spread to new waters through improper disposal by water gardeners and by clinging to watercraft, trailers, and equipment. It spreads naturally when plant pieces break off and float on water currents. Plants regenerate each spring when overwintering vegetative buds (turions) float to the surface and grow rapidly into tangled mats of interlocking plants. Eradicating established infestations is nearly impossible. Your help detecting and reporting new infestations is vital for preventing their spread.

What you can do

- **Learn** to identify European frogbit (see back cover).
- **Inspect** and remove aquatic plants and animals from boat, motor, and trailer.
- **Drain** lake or river water from livewell and bilge before leaving access.
- **Dispose** of unwanted plants in the trash.
- **Never** dump aquatic plants from one body of water into another.
- **Report** new sightings – note exact location; wrap a specimen in a wet paper towel, place in a sealed plastic bag; and call the IL-IN Sea Grant Program in Zion, IL, (847) 872-8677; the IL DNR in Topeka, IL, (309) 968-7531; or the IN DNR in Indianapolis, IN, (317) 232-4120.

REMINDER: Know the rules!

Specimens are needed to confirm sightings, but some jurisdictions prohibit or discourage possession and transport of European frogbit and other invasive aquatic plants and animals. Contact your local natural resource management agency for instructions. Unauthorized introduction of fish, crayfish, or plants into the wild is illegal. Protect your property and our waters.